

SECRET SENSITIVE
THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

12 APR 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

SUBJECT: Net Assessment of North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese Military Forces

In February I asked the CIA, with selected assistance from DoD elements, to initiate a net assessment of North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese military forces. The broad idea was to strike a balance sheet as of two dates: (a) the current date and posture, and (b) a near-term date and prospective posture. A number of specific criteria and assumptions were specified. Of perhaps more interest, however, were the general parameters outlined. Those parameters included:

- . Troop levels (quantity and quality)
- . Equipment
- . Training
- . Leadership
- . Morale
- . Overall capability of each force to
 - defend its own territory
 - project its military power across national boundaries

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In addition, I asked that the study delineate the effect of the USSR and PRC aid and material support in terms of

- . Past, current, and prospective aid levels.
- . What added support could be extended to Hanoi.
- . How much more or less effective the DRV forces would be with augmented or lessened aid levels.
- . Why the USSR and the PRC had not given more sophisticated or larger quantities of weapons to Hanoi.

CIA, with DoD support, has completed the initial net assessment. I am attaching a copy. It is, in my judgment, a solid -- not to mention a timely -- piece of work. It represents an assessment on which we should be able to build over the coming weeks and months and on which we should draw heavily in our various deliberations.

I commend this Net Assessment to your personal attention and to that of the President.

Attachment

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MELVIN R. LAIRD